

The Social Questions Bulletin

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THE METHODIST FEDERATION FOR SOCIAL SERVICE
(UNOFFICIAL)

An organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

150 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK CITY

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REACTION MOBILIZES

The defeat of the Reorganization Bill marks another step in the mobilization of the forces of reaction. It reveals the nature of the coalition that is forming for the Fascist assault upon democracy. Reactionary business was represented by the Committee to Uphold Constitutional Government and the Nation's Defenders, the kind of people who can send telegrams to Washington to the tune of \$160,000. A fair share of these came from Coughlin's radio listeners, which shows that he is reaching and speaking for many whose incomes are on the telegram scale. To the general line-up he contributes, of course, the voice and following of the demagogue. O'Connor, Chairman of the Rules Committee, and representative of Tammany, who led the fight on the floor and in the lobbies, represented traditional pork-and-patronage politics plus small business, plus minority racial groups, emotionally scared by the word "Dictator." A more rational fear of the diminution of democracy, and resentment at too much driving from the White House, account for another section of the victorious army. On the latter score, progressive congressmen from Wisconsin and a couple of Farmer-Laborites from Minnesota were found helping the reactionaries who planned and organized this attack for the purpose of discrediting the President, destroying the New Deal, and preventing any further social legislation.

The Tactics

A conservative critic of the President, Krock, of the *New York Times*, correctly says that a bill to secure business efficiency in our national administration, which has been requested by every president from Taft on, was defeated after all questionable executive controls had been taken out, by the "sham cry of Dictatorship."

Something more was revealed than the willingness of the reactionaries to deceive the people in order to accomplish their ends. Coughlin once more made plain his affinity with Fascism by crying that he preferred an "honest dictatorship." O'Connor shouted on the floor of the House that letters from his constituency showed that the business men were getting in the mood for "revolution."

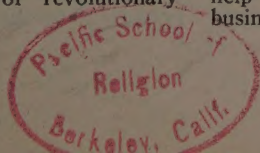
This adds one more voice to the chorus of representatives of reactionary business who in the past year have publicly declared that the time had come, or was drawing near, when direct action was necessary to save the Constitution and the profit system. Here is the plain pattern of Fascism. Not the reds but the reactionaries are calling for revolutionary procedure.

Just as Hitler destroyed Socialism in the name of Socialism, so here *our reactionaries are trying to deceive the people into consenting to the destruction of democracy in the name of democracy*. They raise "the sham cry of dictatorship" in order to mislead the people into tolerance of the dictatorship of big business. Here is an urgent challenge to those in the pulpit who believe that democracy is a collective expression of the Christian way of life. *It becomes their duty to expose the deception of the reactionary attack upon the democratic process before it is too late.*

The Economic Situation

A contributing factor to the success of the reactionaries' strategy is the deepening of the economic crisis, and ignorance of how to escape it. The soothing word, recession, has lost its charm. Snell, the Republican leader in the House, proclaims with even more truth than party animus, that we are in a worse depression than '32.

So the Administration must eat its words and start spending to help the unemployed, and start planning to appropriate billions to help big business, little business, and small business. A lot of this is to be disguised as



loans that nobody believes will be paid. This is economic Fascism as the Nazis gleefully told Hoover in Berlin.

When once more this pump-priming proves inadequate, then the full forces of conscious and unconscious political Fascism will make their major assault upon our democracy. *For that day, we must now begin to prepare the people, by patiently explaining what is happening, and what needs to be done according to the program we have agreed upon.*

—H. F. W.

COMMON HONESTY ABOUT WORTHINESS

"I sat as a listener in a favored group of the well-to-do a few days ago. What these favored persons were saying about the relief for the unemployed was a fright. The refrain, especially on the lips of the feminine elements of the group, was that those who could not find jobs were worthless. I could not help thinking that it would not be wise for that particular circle to push too hard on the aspect of worthlessness, taking worthless to mean the inability to find jobs and earn money. It would have been cruel to raise the question as to how many of the group had ever earned anything.

"Accepting the social worth of investing in financial enterprises, in banking money for interest, even in speculation, the query is still pertinent as to how many who live without some form of toil are worth anything of consequence to society.

"Should all those who get money by the very fact that they already have money, hear that society should swoop down on them and make them work? Not at all, and for a sound reason. They would not be much good as workers. Most of them never have worked enough to make their service as workers pay.

"Here really is one of the sorest spots in our modern social system: the closing of doors to those who can work and who can work well, while leaving money—or so much money—in the hands of those who could not work effectively if they tried.

"I heard a rich woman a few weeks ago subscribe with astonishing liberality to a cause of public importance. I expressed some admiration whereupon she avowed that the money had come to her by inheritance, that the wealth it represented had been socially created, and that she had never earned a cent of it, and probably couldn't if she would. She felt that what she had done under depression conditions, was only common honesty."

—BISHOP MCCONNELL
in the *New York Post*.

LABOR'S CAUSE — OUR CAUSE

Cooperation in Minneapolis: In March the Rev. E. T. Randall of Minneapolis, Minn., and our Field Secretary, C. C. W., set up a week's program for a joint session of the Minnesota M.F.S.S. members and other liberal church groups to form a chapter of the United Christian Council for Democracy. At the first session, the Minneapolis taxicab strike was discussed. Through the intervention of Judge William Anderson quick contact was made with the Independent Cab Owners, and the Taxicab Drivers Union (affiliate of the famous Teamsters Union).

On the second day of the U.C.C.D. meeting an unofficial hearing was arranged, with the members of the newly established organization participating in the discussion. The Union representatives made clear that they were asking a \$24 weekly wage, while the Owners' representatives made \$15 with a 40% commission as their best offer. The U.C.C.D. urged the cab owners and the Drivers Union to organize a cooperative taxicab company—as the only solution at which they could arrive for the apparently irreconcilable difference.

Before the adjournment of the meeting those present drew up a report which was later adopted by the Public Affairs Committee of the Minneapolis Ministers Federation, declaring the "demand of the drivers for a more adequate wage not unreasonable" and urging that the strike be settled "peacefully by negotiation rather than by putting cabs on the street under police protection."

Violence in Kansas City, Mo. Charles Webber reports that on arriving in Kansas City on March 11 he found the members of Ford Local No. 249 of the United Automobile Workers Union out on strike. He talked with one of the victims of company violence, Carl Stevens (a member of the Union and also of the Greendale Baptist Church) whose well attested story is rather typical. During January, while driving in the city, Stevens found that he was being followed by another car. Four men in this car with riot guns ordered him to put up his hands and get out. Being totally unarmed he obeyed, only to be so cruelly beaten with clubs and guns that he suffered a skull fracture and other severe head wounds.

At the Ford plant Mr. Webber found the Kansas City police preventing the strikers from peaceful picketing. He protested to the policemen on duty, but to no avail. The president of the Union later secured an appointment for him with the City Manager, Judge H. F. McElroy who refused to discuss the issue. The local Y.W. Industrial Secretary and several others have agreed to test out the police ruling in the near future. As for Mr. Webber himself, he did what everyone of us cognizant of such abuses should do—reported the whole matter immediately to the American Civil Liberties Union (31 Union Square West, N. Y. C.). The A.C.L.U. is to instigate legal action to restore the right of peaceful picketing to the Ford employees.

FROM THE FIELD

Student M.F.S.S. Units now exist in Albion College (Mich.); Boston University School of Theology; Central State Teachers College (Edmond, Okla.); Cornell College, (Mt. Vernon, Iowa); Drew Theological Seminary; Garrett Biblical Institute; Kent University, (Ohio); Union Theological Seminary (N. Y. C.); University of Oregon—nine in all.

M.F.S.S. Conference Units have been established in the following 27 conferences: California, Central New York, Central Pennsylvania, Colorado, Detroit, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New England, New England Southern, New Jersey, Newark, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pacific Northwest, Rock River, Southern California, Upper Iowa, West Virginia, Wisconsin.

If your Conference has such a unit but does not appear in our list, will you not write in to the office in order that contacts with other similar groups may be established?

New Jersey State Unit: Typical of how such a unit gets under way is the case of New Jersey where two conferences (New Jersey and Newark) have combined.

A "meeting of charter members" was called for March 24 to form a unit, the purpose of which should be: (1) to provide opportunities for untrammelled public discussion, (2) to inform the membership of points of tension throughout the State, (3) to watch State legislation, giving notice of pending legislation of social importance, (4) to supply worship materials emphasizing social aspects of our Christian gospel, (5) to offer cooperation on the local fields where conflict is active.

At the meeting it was decided that membership in the National M.F.S.S. shall be a prerequisite for membership in the New Jersey Unit.

Minimum Salary Plan: The United Session of the Kansas Conference in March fixed the minimum cash salary for 1938-39 for a married minister in effective relation at \$900, and for an unmarried minister at \$750. The pastor in each charge is required to assume one-half of the apportionment, which runs from $\frac{1}{2}$ of 1% for salaries of \$1200 or less, to 2% for salaries of \$2500 or over.

"Statement of Purpose": The Social Service Committee of the Central Pennsylvania Annual Conference at its meeting in Harrisburg on March 31 adopted the Statement of Purpose of the M.F.S.S. and agreed to embody our program in its report to the Annual Conference.

Financing the Field Trips: From January 2 to March 23 C. C. W. was continuously in the field covering a wide territory from New York to Kansas. His traveling expenses during this period totalled \$208.31. Contributions toward this expense from members and

friends of the Federation came to \$273.96 (including \$10 from the A.C.W.U. of Richmond, Va.). Balance turned over to the Federation: \$65.65.

From the very limited field work done by H. G. M. in the immediate vicinity of New York City, since last October, \$51.75 has come into the Federation treasury. This was in addition to the rather considerable amount turned in to the North American Committee to Aid Spanish Democracy, for relief and medical aid in Spain.

The balance turned over to the office by H. F. W., on expense account contributed by the various cities on his western trip, was \$42.50.

Pro: From Wilmington, Del., a layman writes, "Your field secretary Mr. Webber was here at our Annual Conference, and after hearing his message and the program you are trying to get the churches to adopt, I feel proud of the fact that I am one of the few members of this organization in this section of the country. It makes one feel that the churches haven't completely reconciled themselves to an evil economic system, because their support is at present dependent upon that system, but that they are constantly striving for something better. I wish we had more men in the field of the caliber of Mr. Webber."

And Con: From Kansas a preacher writes C. C. W.: "I am sorry that I did not hear very much of your afternoon address, as there have come several reverberations from it, and I would like to have known what it was that disturbed the business men—probably your reference to the present economic order. . . . The chairman of my Board of Trustees felt that your address was even 'Communitic' and wired New York to find out about you and the Federation. Apparently, the persons to whom he wired are not greatly in sympathy with your organization, for they told him that there was no doubt but that the Federation is allied with the Communistic group."

The Office: Helen Murray leaves the office on April 15 to return September 15. During her absence C. C. W. will have general (though intermittent) supervision of office matters, and Mrs. Rutherford will continue on the job.

The National Conference on Work and Security: Fred A. Blossom of Washington, D. C., acted as official delegate for the M.F.S.S. at the National Conference on Work and Security, held in Washington on March 19 and 20. The national office can not afford to send delegates to such conferences and it is only as our members consent to finance themselves that we can be represented. The program proposed by the Workers' Alliance was very significant—most significant in its Work Section which demanded among other "musts," that Congress authorize a six-year program of building, construction, and other

projects, that a \$500,000,000 flood control program be started at once, that vocational training be provided for the youth and vocational retraining for middle-aged unemployed. Support for the Schwellenbach-Allen Resolution (H. R. 176) may be said briefly to make concrete the Conference recommendations.

Conference on World Economic Cooperation. Through the courtesy of Charles Boss, Executive Secretary of our General Conference Commission on World Peace, C. C. W. was made an official delegate to the Conference on World Economic Cooperation, Washington, D. C., March 23-26. He served on the Commissions on General Economic Problems and Labor Problems and was instrumental in getting the Conference at first to adopt "the method of social-economic planning under democratic control, with social ownership of all things necessary to its successful operation, as the method by which the development of personality can be progressively realized." Later "control" gave way to "processes" and the "social ownership" clause was eliminated.

FROM OUR MAIL BAG

The Neutral Thousands: Commenting on the drive to regiment Los Angeles women into a reactionary movement against labor, *The Messenger*, edited by the Rev. Floyd J. Seaman, reveals the true character of such regimentation. One of the organizations formed on this basis is called "The Neutral Thousands." A committee of fair-minded citizens recently investigated this organization and its report makes clear that the T.N.T.'s are not "neutral." Their advocacy of the so-called Independent Unions (virtually Company Unions) disqualifies them as impartial mediators in labor disputes.

"Speakers before women's clubs and similar organizations of Los Angeles have been repeatedly stressing woman's responsibility in public affairs. . . . We have faith in the real sincerity and honesty of purpose of the average woman, and we believe that if the women will investigate the great need for improving wages and working conditions, they will use their influence in behalf of the working people. Certainly, they will not join any organization intended to defeat the labor movement. The union is the means and method by which the worker lifts himself to a better and more Christian standard of life. Christian women will wish to stand by those thousands who need them most—the working women of this city."—*The Messenger*.

Suggestion to Women: An organization upon whose attitude toward Labor you can rely, is the League of Women Shoppers (220 Fifth Ave., N. Y. C.). Los Angeles has a branch, as have 18 other cities. Join your local League if you have one to join, or if not, gather up a group of women and found one.

Open Question: Writing of his contact with a liberal priest in Cali, Colombia, George Howard comments: "The working classes look to him as their best friend. Socialists and Communists always invite him to their parades and . . . he goes! Needless to say, he is not in good standing with his Bishop—no progressive priest in South America ever is! I wonder if all of my readers would approve of their ministers being friendly with the underprivileged masses?"

THE M.F.S.S. in PRINT

How to Use Our Bulletin: Call it to the attention of some Congressman interested in the special subject dealt with by some issue of our *Bulletin*. That's what happened in the case of our February number: "Growing Unemployment—Decreasing Relief." One of our members put a copy into the hands of the Hon. H. Jerry Voorhis of California who on March 8 incorporated it in a speech he was making in the House of Representatives. Thus it was spread on the *Congressional Record*.

Our member paid for its reprinting and, due largely to the interest and cooperation of Ben Marsh of the *People's Lobby*, it has been mailed out to nearly 2500 people who do not receive the *Bulletin* as regular subscribers. This list includes C.I.O. and A.F. of L. union heads, Farm Bureau officials, 200 rabbis, 200 priests, 700 Protestant ministers, and editors of 325 liberal publications. We still have here in the office available for your use some 2000 of these reprints. Send in!

"Concerted Action for Peace." Dr. Ward's address at the Madison Square Garden Peace Rally on April 4 has been put into pamphlet form. It sells at 5c a copy (50 copies \$2; 100 copies \$3; 500 copies \$12.50).

One of our Executive Committee wrote of our proposal to issue this pamphlet, "Publish it by all means. I believe it to be one of the most important addresses of recent months."

A Theological School professor "needs" a hundred for his classes. A woman executive spoke for a hundred before the pamphlet was off the press. Another writes, "We desperately need such a simple statement and program for liberals to use in Washington."

Two thousand have been sent out on one order; 1500 on another. It is an imperative message that—imperatively—needs spreading.

A Reading List of the Significant Books and Pamphlets of 1937, compiled by Katharine Terrill (Congregational Council for Social Action) and Helen Murray (M.F.S.S.) 5c.

OTHER PAMPHLET RECOMMENDATIONS

The Demand for Regulation of Labor Unions, International Juridical Association, 100 Fifth Avenue, N. Y. C.
The C. I. O. and the Farmers, 3c; Comm. for Industrial Organization, 1106 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, D. C.
Support Fair Labor Standards in Industry, Labor's Non-Partisan League, Willard Hotel, Washington, D. C.